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ABSTRACT

This presentation identifies factors which contributed to the rise of gifted/talented education programs in California from 1960 to 1987, factors contributing to the demise of such programs, and recommendations for improving the California Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program. Recent years have brought about a lessening of the program's uniqueness, quality, and substance. Three interrelated factors causing the demise of gifted/talented education in California are: inadequate funding, loss of accountability, and reductions in programming. Actions and attitudes of California State Department of Education personnel have contributed both to the rise and to the demise of gifted/talented programs. The Department's actions impeding leadership of the GATE program include, among others, eclipsing gifted/talented education with priorities given to ethnic minorities, disadvantaged, and handicapped persons, and appointing managers who have little background in gifted/talented education. Many very able and supportive persons in the Department are commended for their contributions to gifted education, including research support, program evaluation, and federal grant administration. There is concern that the program may be terminated, though an independent study and the Sunset Review Advisory Committee III established its need. Strategies for ensuring the program's continuance are outlined. (JDD)

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THE RISE AND DEMISE OF GIFTED EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

Factors leading to eminence, to deterioration, and to transforming aspects of Gifted and Talented Education Programs in California.

- A presentation at the 7th World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children

Salt Lake City Utah
August, 1987

By Paul D. Plowman, Ed.D.

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California has been a wellspring of gifted education for the United States of America and the World. California has shared research findings, generative ideas, and practical guidelines. As a result, other states and nations have benefited from: research-based programming of pupils; taxonomic approaches for improving higher intellectual skills; observation/demonstration centers; and administrative structures for assuring valid and reliable identification; appropriate placement in a range of program options; and qualitatively different and uniquely appropriate education.

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Dr. Plowman is Administrative Director of the Wilde Woode Children's Center in Palm Springs, California (since March, 1987). Prior to that (1961-1987), he served as the Gifted Education Consultant and Federal Project Director for the State of California. He is also a professor at the University of the Pacific (summer, 1987).

Having attained a degree of eminence in researching, identifying and serving gifted children, one would assume continuing leadership and support from California. This is not the case. Deterioration is evident. The Gifted and Talented Education program is in jeopardy. It could be terminated in 1988!

Choked by the insensitivity of legislators; the lack of genuine commitment (which means follow-through support) by state officials; restrictions of a stultifying bureaucracy; and hedonistic priorities of society, gifted and talented education in California no longer has the force, the quality, and the promise that it once had. In this presentation, I will:

1. Identify factors which have contributed to the rise of gifted and talented education programs in California from 1960-1987;
2. Identify factors which are contributing to the demise of such programs; and
3. Describe what can be done to transform the California Gifted and Talented Program so that it can again be a major force in developing extraordinary intellectual, academic, high-achievement, creative, leadership, and performing and visual arts ability - -demonstrated and potential!

I will focus my remarks on crucial factors affecting gifted education in California during the tenure of four superintendents of public instruction: Dr. Roy Simpson (1950-1962); Dr. Max Rafferty (1963-1971); Dr. Wilson Riles (1972-1984); and Mr. Bill Honig (1985-today). Assisting this messages with their own presentations on school district-level problems and solutions are four prominent California educators:

1. Robert Swain, Director of the Second World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children and former Gifted Program Director in the San Juan Unified School District - - a school district which in recent years had 65 elementary schools, 10 intermediate schools, and 11 high schools, all with 5,000 participating gifted students. Mr. Swain was also president of the California Association for the Gifted.

2. Fay Fintel, Resource Teacher in the San Diego Unified School District and leader in both the Association for San Diego Educators of the Gifted and the California Association for the Gifted. San Diego is nationally recognized for outstanding program provisions and careful assessment of the gifted since 1950. Today 6,000 pupils participate. Three exemplary features are exemplary programming for highly gifted students, a "Structure of Intellect" scchool, and comprehensive staff development.

3. Bruce De Vries, former Gifted Program Director in the Ukiah Unified School District. Mr. De Vries also served as president of the California Association for the Gifted. This year, his Yokayo School was one of the few schools which received an award of Excellence from the California State Department of Education.

4. Joan Estin, is a teacher in the Gilmore intermediate School in a rural, mountainous, gold-mining area of California. Her prominence is evident in the quality and depth of thinking and moral and ethical development of her students.

It is evident in the high esteem with which she is held by parents and other members of the Grass Valley and Nevada City Communities.

A gifted child in California is an individual whose capacity for excellence is far beyond chronological peers - - and whose extraordinary abilities require special activities and services. The program grew from 38,000 pupils in 188 school districts with $1.3 million of funding in 1961 to 220,000 pupils in 428 school districts with $22 million of funding for 1987-88. The gifted and talented pupils in 428 of the 1024 California public school districts comprise 5% of the statewide K-12 enrollment.

From the monumental Standford University research of Lewis Terman (1919-today) and from the practical experience of school districts throughout California, have come a wealth of insights, guidelines, and products for assuring excellence in education. But we must note that the title of this presentation contains the word, "demise" as well as "rise." Demise might seem to be too harsh a word to persons who know that only 3-5 school districts drop out of the gifted and talented program each year and that the governor did not eliminate GATE from the 1987-88. Notwithstanding these facts, current funding is inadequate. The GATE program is in jeopardy! I should point out that "demise" refers not only to the conceptual shell; it also refers to the substance, the essence of excellence. What we are witnessing is a lessening of uniqueness, of quality, of substance, of excellence, and of accountability.

Three interrelated factors causing the demise of gifted and talented education in California are: (1) inadequate funding, (2) loss of accountability, and (3) reductions in programming.

FUNDING

Recommendations based upon the legislatively financed 3-year study, "Educational Programs for Gifted Pupils," (1957-1960), - - - of special grouping, acceleration, and enrichment-in-regular-class programs - - - supported additional annual per-pupil funding of $250. Oa that amount $40 was to have been used for identification, the cost of administering of a Stanford Binet individual intelligence test and of preparing a case study. During the first 5 years of the California Gifted Program, a per pupil support level of only $40 was available for both identification and program costs. Gradually that amount increased to $100 for 1987-88.

Last year I called the Federal Reserve Bank in San Francisco and asked for the 1986 value of a 1960 dollar and learned that it was $3.69. Thus the 1987-88 additional per pupil funding of $100 per year is equivalent to only $27 in 1960 funding - - at a time when the funding should have been $250 but was actually $40.

No wonder school districts with limited local resources have opted for the least expensive and oftentimes the least adequate means of identifying and serving the gifted. Yet the Legislature in 1980 called upon school districts to expand both the identification procedures and programming, adding the program categories of creativity, leadership and the performing and visual arts.

U.S. Census Statistics show that an eighteen year old male in 1977 would have a projected additional life income in the United States of $440,000 if he completed 5 years of university work instead of completing 4 years of high school. Because the amount would be added income we might assume a modest 25% tax, resulting in $110,000 of addition tax revenue for the federal government.

If we divide the $110,000 by 13 years of public school, we show that the additional tax revenue is equivalent to $8,461 for each year of public school. Thus the gifted who are presumed to be the ones taking a fifth year of university work generate revenue which is twice the amount of the annual per-pupil cost of schooling. In other words, the gifted who are challenged to take graduate work, on the average, more than pay for their schooling.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The considerable loss of accountability since 1980 is attributable to the loss of school property-tax revenue to school districts resulting from a state-wide tax reform ballot initiative. As a result of reduced funding, school districts: (1) eliminated GATE coordinator positions, (2) assigned GATE responsibilities to already overly burdened directors of special education, or (3) added duties to GATE coordinators. Ann Lord, an outstanding GATE coordinator who had an excellent multi-option program [and observation/demonstration center] for 4,000 gifted children in Fremont, California, was made the principal of two school in addition to full-time GATE responsibilities... for identification, curriculum development, program management, inservice education, budgetary control, and involvement of parents.

In recent years I have conducted State Department of Education reviews of gifted and talented education programs and in some school districts found:

1. Invalid identification
2. Inappropriate placement of students in program options.
3. Failure to adhere to standards for assuring uniquely appropriate learning experiences to meet unmet needs.
4. Improper us of State Funds.

5. Failure to involve parents as required in planning, implementing, and evaluating gifted and talented programs.

6. Little attention to comprehensive evaluation.

REDUCTION IN PROGRAMMING

A reduction of programming is also evident. Noted especially are a reduction of program options, categories of children served, and of counseling.

Other factors contributing to the deterioration and demise of GATE programs are:

1. Stultifying restrictions on the leadership of State Department of Education personnel;
2. Lack of commitment by elected officials;
3. Contests for power and position by legislators, the governor, and the State Superintendent of Public instruction;
4. Suppressive attitudes and action of parents whose children were not identified as gifted and talented; and
5. Clique (small group) control of professional organizations and parent groups.

Four other factors are:

6. The syphoning off of potential funding by already overly financed, sometimes wasteful, and often unaccountable programs for the handicapped and economically disadvantaged children;
7. Failure to identify and serve the gifted and talented within the disadvantaged, handicapped, and ethnic-minority populations.

8. Professional educators who fail to support qualitatively different and uniquely appropriate education of the education of the gifted and talented; and

9. Failure of GATE educators to convince 95% of the population that their future, to a large extent, depends upon their supporting special learning opportunities for children whose developed analytical, innovative, and entrepreneurial talent and conceptual and technological breakthroughs will assure a growing economy and guarantee a high quality of life for all persons.

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (SDE) ACTION CONTRIBUTING TO THE RISE AND DEMISE OF THE ESSENCE OF EXCELLENCE INHERENT IN AND PROMULGATED BY GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION:

Actions and attitudes of California State Department personnel have contributed both to the rise and to the demise of gifted and talented programs in California.

In 1961, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Roy Simpson published the foundational three-year research study (1957-1960) "Educational Programs for Gifted Pupils" directed by Dr. Ruth Martinson - a study which provided evidence needed to pass legislation to establish the California Mentally Gifted Minor Program (1961-1979) - - and to convince legislative committees in many of the 44 states currently with gifted programs that it was in the interest of their states to support uniquely appropriate learning opportunities for gifted children.

During the tenure of Dr. Simpson's successor,, Dr. Max Rafferty, California Mentally Gifted Minor state consultants were instrumental in creating a national Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted and in helping to promote gifted and talented education throughout the United States. Academic excellence was applauded and furthered. A three-year U.S. Office of Education "Cooperative Research Grant" to California made it possible to develop and demonstrate the respective value of acceleration, enrichment, counseling/instructional, and special-class program options.

Before becoming Superintendent of Public Instruction, and only a few years after the start of the California Mentally Gifted Minor Program, Dr. Wilson Riles informed me that "The Day of the Gifted has passed and that it was time now for the disadvantaged." I should have challenged that statement by asking "What about the extraordinary and largely untapped pool of gifted that has yet to be identified within the disadvantaged population?" Unfortunately,, Dr. Riles attention was so riveted upon bringing poor black and Hispanic children up to average performance that little time and attention was directed to the gifted. During his tenure, we did establish procedures for overcoming discrepancies existing in ethnic group participation in the MGM program and the GATE program. Dr. Riles, however, bears the responsibility for not using the State Compensatory Education Plan to advance excellence for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged pupils, for the main, beyond the mean. It is interesting to note that the first year of the Compensatory Education program, that $40/gifted pupil had to suffice for both the costs of identification and additional programming.

At that time, it cost $40 to do a Standford Binet intelligence Scale and to prepare a case study. At that time the Title I Compensatory Education Program spent $150/disadvantaged child for the case study alone.

The current superintendent of public instruction, Mr. Bill HOnig has pushed for quality indicators in all curriculum areas. Gifted and Talented is seen as a way of upgrading the upper 25% of the school population.

My overall impression is that California's politically motivated state superintendents of public instruction care mainly about the vote potential of 95% of the population. Little attention is given to the gifted.

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IMPEDIMENTS TO LEADERSHIP OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION UNIT INCLUDE:

1. Eclipsing GATE with priorities given to ethnic minorities, to poor persons, and to mentally and physically handicapped persons.
2. Appointing GATE unit managers who have little or no background in Gifted and Talented Education.
3. Providing insufficient secretarial support for the consultants to do assigned responsibilities.
4. Reducing travel allotments to the point that it was impossible to provide statewide leadership; attend regional meetings; conduct inservice education; investigate complaints; and train local coordinators and program reviewers.
5. Frequently changing the location of the GATE unit administratively within the SDE and within buildings which house state personnel.

6. Without prior discussion, reassigning GATE consultants to other units in the SDE and to field work. At one time I was assigned to a field team while I was managing 2 federal projects in addition to doing my regular state work. On another occasion my secretary informed me, "By the way, you are now a migrant education consultant." Fortunately, higher officials reversed these decisions.

7. When the total Department budget was $42 million, we were told that a $400 amount was not available to mail Gifted and Talented Education applications which were needed by 428 school districts serving 220,000 gifted students in order to qualify for $21 million in state funds.

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SUPPORT:

As a balance to comments on a stultifying bureaucracy, I should hasten to add that there are many very able and supportive persons in the state who have cooperated over the years. These persons contributed immeasurably to the rise of Gifted and Talented Education. It should be noted that the California State Department of Education provided the structure and support for the foundational 3-year study which resulted in research data needed to convince legislators to fund mentally gifted minor programs.

State-Department-of-Education officials, including Dr. May Rafferty, made possible early trips to Washington D.C. - trips which resulted in the formation of the Council of State Directors of Program for the Gifted and which during a 20-year period brought $1.3 million federal development funds to California. The State Department of Education served as a statewide platform for initiating new ideas.

The mantle of officialdom provided access to and acceptance by parent groups and professional organizations. It made possible the evaluation of local programs and resultant (1) adherence to standards for identifying pupils and conducting qualitatively different and uniquely appropriate gifted and talented programs (2) use of state funds for improving the teaching staff, and
(3) involvement of parents in planning, implementing, and evaluation GATE programs.

Importantly, the Department did approve of my initiating, writing, and administering eight federal grants totaling $1.3 million. These grants were critical factors in the rise and eminence of gifted education in California. They:

1. Demonstrated, developed, and validated program options: acceleration, enrichment, special class, counseling instructional programs, and special classes;
2. Produced a state framework, 30 curriculum guides, films and filmstrips;
3. Trained 10,000 teachers through regional inservice education;
4. Established a 3-year regional resource center;
5. Integrated intellectual and creative skill development in parents, teachers, and pupils;
6. Established life-oriented counseling programs;
7. Assisted in the transition from the mentally gifted minor to the more broadly based GATE program;
8. Helped districts with comprehensive program development.

Regional directors of aspects of these federal projects were later fused into a SDE State Assistance Team.

Team members continue to respond to innumerable referrals for service to neighboring school districts - - services which the understaffed and underbudgeted SDE Gifted and Talented Unit is unable to render.

Also, I should note that is 1971, at a crucial hearing conducted by members of the State Department of Finance, the Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Tom Shellhammer, stated that the Mentally Gifted Minor Program was probably the most accountable program in the State Department of Education.

SUNSETTING GATE:

During the past 7 years, categorical programs (including GATE) were assigned dates when they would terminate (sunset) if further action were not taken by the state legislature. Presumably data would be gathered before the sunset date to either establish the need for such programs or provide reasons why they should be terminated. An independent 3-year, legislatively financed research study by the RMC Corporation (1980-1983) and the June, 1986 report to the Legislature by the Sunset Review Advisory Committee III clearly established the need for the GATE program. Membership of the Advisory Committee III was made up of 6 person appointed by the Governor; 3 members appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly;and 3 members appointed by the President pro Tempore of the Senate. The executive summary contains this statement:

> "Once a national leader in the education of the gifted and talented, California now ranks twenty-first in its pupil expenditures among the states that offer gifted programs. The combined federal and state budget for Special Education in 1985-86 for California [for approximately 330,000 students] was $1,142,000,000.

By comparison, gifted programs [for approximately 220,000 students] receive no federal support and the total 1985-86 expenditure for GATE was only $20,000,000. Ninety-six districts are on the waiting list for inclusion in the program and for a portion of the allocations. Many other districts have become too discouraged to apply. This has resulted in a significant number of qualified students remaining both unidentified and unserved."

THE SUNSET III ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED:

1. That the GATE program not be terminated;
2. That it be mandated;
3. That it be fully funded;
4. That California make a commitment to regain it's national and world leadership in gifted and talented education;
5. That institutions of higher education be required to offer GATE related courses at the pre-service and graduate level;
6. That the State Department of Education unit be adequately staffed and funded;
7. That wherever possible, homogeneous groups for GATE students should be provided;
8. That research should be conducted to improve junior high school and high school GATE programs.

Despite laudatory findings and recommendation by RMC and the Sunset Committee, no significant leadership stance by the Governor, by the legislature, or by the Superintendent of Public Instruction assures the future and suggests steps to prevent the gradual demise of the California Gifted and Talented Education Program.

To be sure, once again we are tantalized by a $30+million budget augmentation proposal.. And, now again, we have yet another groupf to evaluate education, the Governor's Commission on Educational Quality. The Commission is scheduled to present its final report in June, 1988. It would be naieve to think that any significant legislation on education will be passed before June. By then it will be too late for 1987-88 legislation. We will be told to wait yet another year - perhaps 1989. By then GATE could be sunsetted.

EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT US THAT EVALUATION EFFORTS INITIATED, SUPPORTED, AND CARRIED OUT BY ESTABLISHED UNITS OF STATE GOVERNMENT ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY APPEAR TO BE, THAT IS, ARE NOT ALWAYS HONEST MEANS OF GATHERING DATA NEEDED FOR IMPARTIAL ASSESSMENT. SOMETIMES THEY ARE MEANS OF POSTPONING NECESSARY FUNDING, AND OF DESTROYING PROGRAMS.

Experience has taught us that evaluation efforts initiated, supported, and carried out by established units of State Government are not always what they appear to be, that is, are not always honest means of gathering needed data for an impartial assessment. Sometime they are means of postponing necessary funding, and of destroying a program.

RECAPITULATION

RISE OF GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION:

The rise of gifted and talented education to an established place in California public school education is attributable to evident needs of individuals, society, to available resources for meeting needs, and to individuals and agencies, and parent and professional organizations which use these resources to achieve educational and societal objectives.

DEMISE OF GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION:

The demise of gifted and talented education is caused by:

1. A funding base that is inadequate to provide high quality, valid, and fully accountable programs;
2. Lack of experience and efficient management;
3. A sense of egalitarianism that pervades America;
4. Negative attitudes of parents whose children did not qualify for GATE, of certain elected officials,of regular classroom teachers, and of unsympathetic or politically oriented administrators;
5. Other priorities by legislature and state superintendents of public instruction - which divert attention and support away from the needs of the gifted and talented and away from gifted and talented education.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

IDEAS FOR DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH FACTORS WHICH THREATEN GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION:

First of all, a starting point certainly would be to implement each of the recommendations of the Sunset Advisor III Committee:

- Mandate Gifted and Talented Education for all of the 1024 public schools districts;
- Fully fund the program so that it can achieve its high goals and benefit individuals and society
- Require universities and four year colleges to offer related teacher pre-service and graduate courses;
- Whenever possible, provide homogeneous grouping and special class options
- Conduct research on how to improve junior-high-school and high school GATE programs.

Second, Get Gifted Education on the agenda of:

- The U.S. Governors' annual Conference;
- The Council of Chief of State School Officers;
- Professional Associations such as: College and University Presidents, Academic Deans, School Administrators, National Educational Association, Subject-Content Associations (i.e. Social Studies), and the National Association of State Boards of Education, and
- The United States Chamber of Commerce.

Third: Establish an advocacy grid to reach all leaders and member in the Congress and state legislature - and all agencies and organizations which could further excellence in Gifted and Talented Education.

Fourth: Begin the process of reconceptualizing and re-designing Gifted Education to make it truly responsive to national and state needs and priorities and to the needs of gifted children.

Fifth: Join with other states and nations in a multi-national world effort to assure excellence in government and in the Human Condition.

These actions should: Stem the tide of deteriorating GATE programs. These actions should bring us together in greater understanding of and harmony with our natural world and fellow human beings.

These actions should identify and optimally develop extraordinary Human Beings. These actions should negate the demise, the cessation; they should assure the rise of the Gifted and Talented Education.

To date, the California Legislature and the Governor of California have not acted upon the findings and recommendations of the RMC 3-year study (1980-83) and of the Sunset Advisory Committee III (1986).

State support for public schools GATE programs is scheduled to terminate 1988.

<u>THE CLOCK IS TICKING!!!</u>